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MENC: A Meaningful Analysis

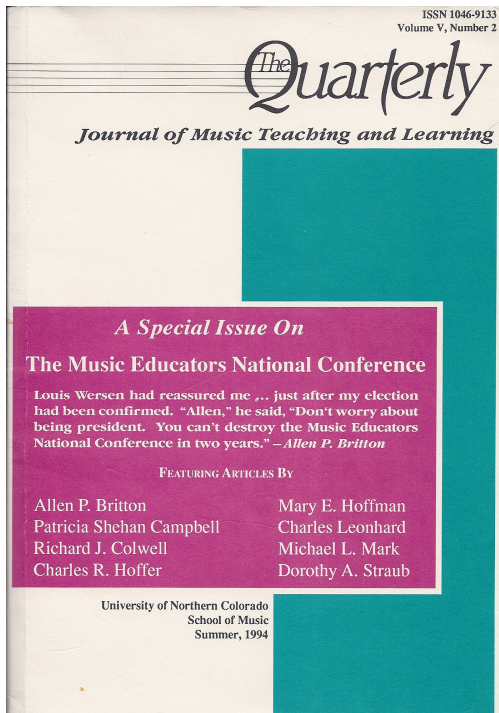
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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

MENC: A Meaningful Analysis

By Manny Brand

Southwest Texas State University

Someone once said that the world is made up of stories, not atoms. This certainly applies to the “world” of the Music Educators National Conference. One could, of course, easily examine MENC in atomistic terms — noting the size and characteristics of the membership, compiling a detailed list of its publications, and describing major functions and accomplishments. In contrast, this special issue offers a more meaningful analysis of MENC and contains a rich and intimate description of the problems and promises of our premier professional organization and the personalities who have shaped it. With warts and all, MENC is still the organization that music teachers look to for inspiration and guidance. In the pages that follow, the past and present world of MENC is, for the first time, viewed through “stories” by eight of our profession’s great intellectual and inspirational leaders.

Not surprisingly, Allen Britton’s lead article is a gem. Having known almost every MENC president since 1936 (when Joseph E. Maddy served as president), Britton’s heartfelt article is full of insightful anecdotes about MENC’s most prominent personalities and even describes some of the most memorable events of his own presidency. None of us are surprised to see this treasure of a man produce a treasure of an article. Talk about good-hearted humor — who else (save for maybe Charles Leonhard) would say, “MENC and AMS never even knew of each other’s existence.”

Speaking of Charles Leonhard, I cannot think of anyone else who could have possibly chaired an MENC national committee before even being a member! (This little tidbit alone is worth your year’s subscription.) Leonhard, of course, loves rattling our cages, and we love Charlie most when he points

out our (and MENC’s) contradictions — all in the name of helping us be our best. Leonhard looks at MENC from 1950-1982 through the personalities and accomplishments of past presidencies and each of their national conferences. Leonhard’s sincerity and insight are what make him a legend in our profession.

Dorothy Straub’s term as president just ended, so she is uniquely qualified to reflect on the modern-day complexities and ambitions of MENC. Straub asserts that the (national) “standards project” may be the single most significant event in the history of music education, and she shares with us her reflections of presiding over MENC during these past two years. I always enjoy her thoughtful and advocacy writing.

Charles Hoffer served as MENC president from 1988 to 1990 and is certainly one of music education’s most prolific writers. Here, Hoffer warns us of the perils of an organization without a fixed mission or purpose, and then he reminds us of four critical roles of MENC. He is at his insightful best when noting that there is a tendency for organizations to devote more attention to maintaining an appearance of activity than in accomplishing substantive goals. Hoffer also cogently discusses obstacles within music education which must be overcome if MENC’s potential in advancing music education is to be achieved.

Mary Hoffman, who was MENC president from 1980 to 1982, has the rare ability to focus our attention on the issues that really make a difference in the lives of music teachers. She reviews the wide range of expectations of MENC’s incredibly diverse constituencies, and even shares examples of “presidential mail.” Should MENC focus on policy or advocacy? Hoffman doesn’t flinch. She

believes that MENC's primary role is in the advocacy arena.

Richard Colwell disagrees and argues that MENC should actively consider and incorporate educational policy. Colwell asks why MENC is reluctant to propose and debate educational policy. Colwell always challenges our thinking, and in this article he interestingly compares MENC with other professional educational organizations. Finally, Colwell implores MENC to incorporate higher intellectual demands (of our discipline) and reflect broader societal conditions.


Patricia Campbell applies her usual intellectual passion and elegant writing in assessing MENC's response to the "patchwork of ethnicities that constitute our multiethnic American society." She asks what is MENC's position on the curricular balance between world cultures and the multicultural heritages of American groups? Campbell speaks frankly and directly about MENC's successes and failures in multicultural and world music initiatives.

As we learn in Michael Mark's excellent article, in 1941 Peter Dykema and Karl Gehrkens declared that swing music was not a "legitimate type of human experience." For more than half of this century, MENC failed to endorse and through its leaders actively discouraged the use of popular music in school music programs. As a leading scholar in music education, Mark explores MENC's (post-Tanglewood Symposium) enthusiasm for the inclusion of youth music in music education. He helps us understand the difficult issues surrounding societal change and curricular adaptation.

Regarding "change," both the editor and managing editor positions at TQ will be changing. Effective with our next issue (Fall, 1994), Elza Daugherty will become the new editor. Jonathan Bellman will also be joining the TQ editorial staff as associate editor, and Di Smice has been named managing editor.

It has been a pleasure to serve as editor during the past four years, and I know that the quality of TQ, initially established by founding editor Richard Colwell, will not only continue but increase under the new editorial leadership of Elza Daugherty.

I have enjoyed the support and confidence

of our Board of Editors and University of Northern Colorado academic administrators Shirley Howell and Howard Skinner. It has been especially delightful working with managing editor Doree Pitkin, whose competence and concern for quality academic writing are unmatched. Above all, working with TQ's many authors confirms my belief in the ability of words and the power of ideas to take people where they could not otherwise go. Of course, the reader must be willing to travel along the intellectual path, and for that I thank all readers for helping to make TQ an intellectually sophisticated and successful publication. 



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